

Undergraduates who work while enrolled in college

Faced with increases in education costs, many undergraduates rely heavily on work to help pay for their college education. While having some work experience improves the employment prospects of new college graduates, too many hours spent at work may have an adverse effect on their academic performance. If working impedes students' progress toward attaining a degree, then the primary reason for that work is not fully realized.

- In 1995–96, four out of five undergraduates reported working while they were enrolled in postsecondary education. One-half reported that the primary reason they worked was to help pay for their education, and slightly less than one-third (29 percent) considered themselves primarily as employees who were also taking classes. Students who worked to pay school expenses reported working an average of 25 hours per week while enrolled, while employees who took classes worked an average of 39 hours per week (see supplemental table 52-1).
- Among students who worked to pay school expenses and who also attended school exclusively full time, about one in five (19 percent) also worked full time, and about one-quarter (27 percent) of full-time students worked 21 to 34 hours per week while enrolled. However, students who attended college exclusively part time were much more likely to work full time (45 percent) than those attending exclusively full time (see supplemental table 52-1).
- Among students who worked to pay school expenses, the more hours they worked, the more likely they were to report that their work schedule limited their class schedule, reduced the number of classes they could take, and reduced their class choices.
- Work also affected grades; the more hours students who worked to pay school expenses were employed, the more likely they were to report that work had a negative effect on their grades. More than one-half (55 percent) of students who worked full time reported a negative effect on their grades, compared to about one-third of students who worked 16–20 hours and less than one-fifth of those who worked 1–15 hours.

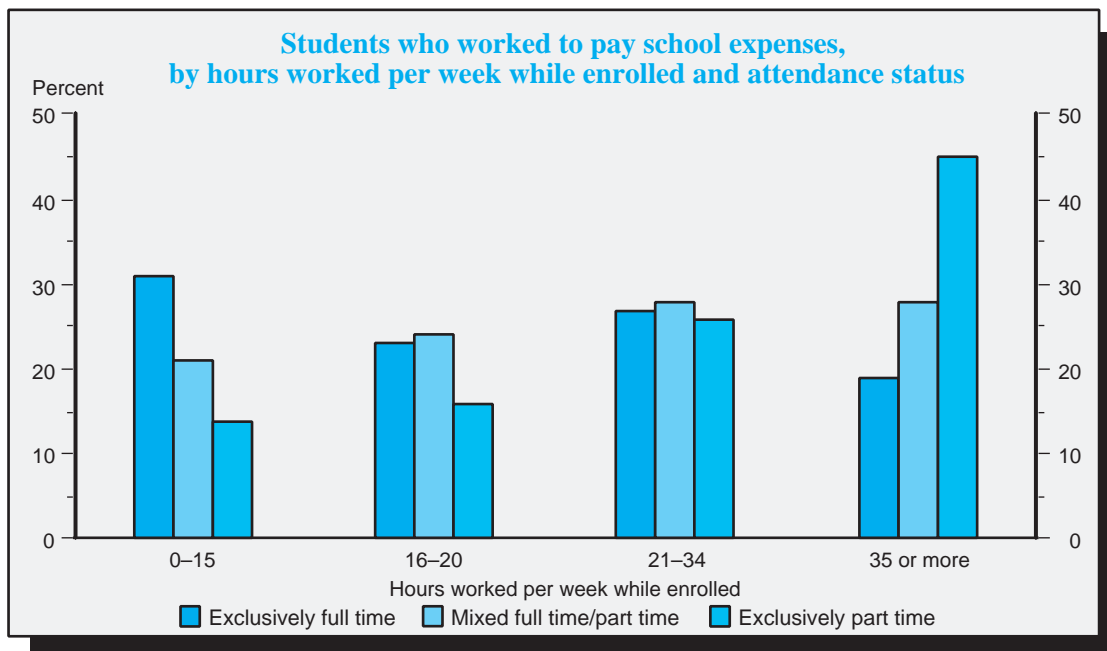
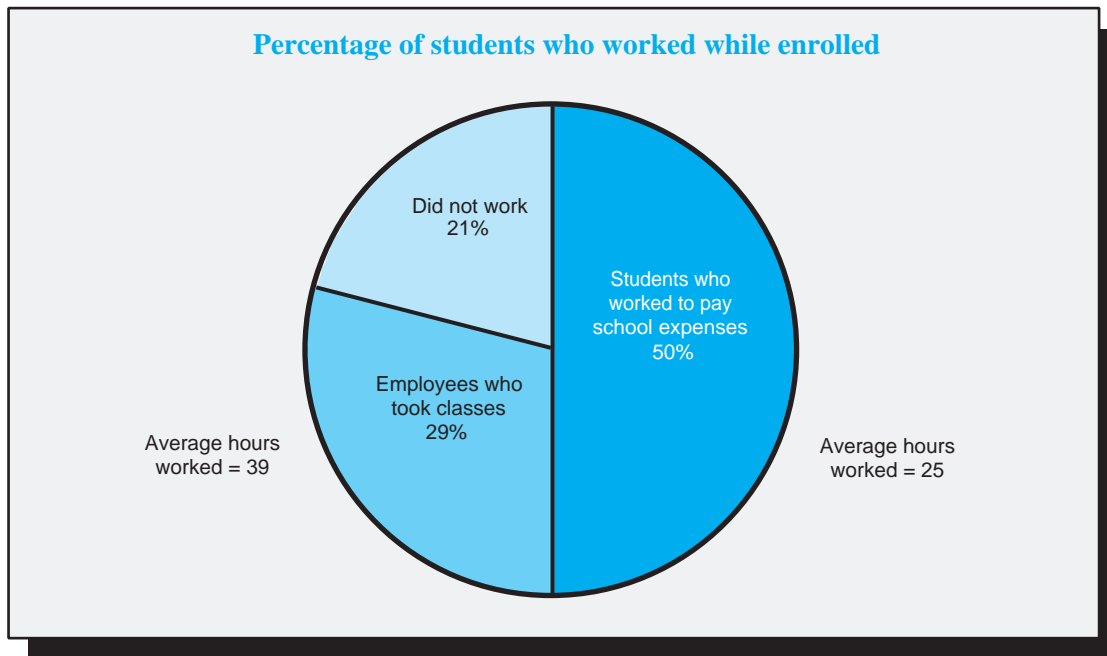
Percentage of undergraduates who worked to pay school expenses who reported various effects of work on their studies, by average hours worked while enrolled: Academic year 1995–96

Average hours worked while enrolled	Course-taking effects			Effect on grades*		
	Limited class schedule	Reduced class choices	Limited number of classes	Positive effect	No effect	Negative effect
Total	39.5	36.1	30.4	14.8	48.4	36.8
1–15	21.7	16.3	15.0	22.3	60.7	17.1
16–20	31.4	27.8	23.5	13.8	51.8	34.3
21–34	41.9	38.4	31.9	11.5	42.6	46.0
35 or more	61.1	59.8	50.6	9.7	35.0	55.4

* Only dependent students (67 percent of students who worked to pay school expenses) were asked this question.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96).

Employment and attendance status of undergraduates: Academic year 1995–96



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96).

Table 52-1 Percentage distribution of undergraduates who worked, by the number of hours worked while enrolled, the average number of hours worked, and selected student and institutional characteristics: 1995–96

Selected student and institutional characteristics	Did not work	1–15 hours	16–20 hours	21–34 hours	35 or more hours	Average number of hours
Total	21.2	13.2	12.4	16.7	36.4	30.3
Students who worked to pay school expenses						
Total	—	25.3	21.8	27.0	26.0	25.1
Attendance status in 1995–96						
Exclusively full time	—	31.4	22.9	27.0	18.7	22.8
Mixed full time/part time	—	20.9	23.8	27.8	27.5	25.9
Exclusively part time	—	14.2	15.7	25.7	44.5	30.3
Type of institution						
Less-than-2-year	—	14.4	22.6	34.4	28.5	26.7
2-year	—	14.0	19.5	29.0	37.5	29.0
4-year	—	34.0	23.5	24.7	17.8	22.3
Degree program						
Certificate	—	18.0	21.8	26.7	33.6	27.8
Associate degree	—	15.2	20.0	30.1	34.8	28.2
Bachelor's degree	—	34.3	23.5	24.9	17.4	22.2
Nondegree program	—	11.0	8.8	23.0	57.2	32.1
Employees who took classes						
Total	—	3.5	5.8	11.8	78.9	38.7
Attendance status in 1995–96						
Exclusively full time	—	7.3	12.1	21.3	59.3	34.2
Mixed full time/part time	—	4.6	10.3	13.4	71.7	36.9
Exclusively part time	—	2.2	3.2	8.9	85.7	40.3
Type of institution						
Less-than-2-year	—	5.0	10.9	21.1	63.0	35.3
2-year	—	2.7	5.5	11.5	80.3	38.9
4-year	—	4.9	5.5	11.6	78.1	38.8
Degree program						
Certificate	—	4.3	6.0	15.4	74.2	37.7
Associate degree	—	2.8	6.2	11.6	79.3	38.8
Bachelor's degree	—	5.5	5.5	12.4	76.7	38.4
Nondegree program	—	1.3	3.6	3.9	91.1	41.0

— Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995–96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96).

Table S52 **Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 52***

Average hours worked while enrolled	Course-taking effects			Effect on grades		
	Limited class schedule	Reduced class choices	Limited number of classes	Positive effect	No effect	Negative effect
Total	1.1	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.2	1.1
1-15	2.0	1.3	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.0
16-20	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.3	2.1	1.9
21-34	2.0	1.9	1.7	1.7	2.4	2.3
35 or more	2.2	2.1	2.5	1.6	3.0	3.3

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995-96 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:96).